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17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

The definition of "culturally alienated" included those people who were the more recent immigrants to the large urban centers; specifically referred to were the American Negro, the Puerto Rican, the Mexican and the southern white. These people were lowest in employment, income, formal education and employment; they were also lowest in participation in civic and social organizations and in most tests of academic ability.

One of the problems that faced interested people was to convince the alienated that one seeks to assist them in the attainment of responsible, productive, creative and dignified ends. Another problem was the bitterness and isolation that the alienated feel about the "good life." The young people found it difficult to compete with their more affluent peers within the setting of many American schools. It was not a lack of concern on the parts of their parents but rather a lack of knowledge and sophistication about what was being taught in the schools. Thus it was evident that the alienated child would be the first to become disenchanted with the schools. By the time this child reached adolescence the problem had become compounded and he began to move away through personal contact and identification with adults in his own world.

The answer to this problem came with rehabilitation programs for the very, very young rather than the dropouts. Special extra-curricular activities, additional staff members and trained personnel could make progress with these children. Also the preparation of profes - sionals-teachers, social workers, therapists, and guidance counselors--should include special training in the sociology and psychology of this group.

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WHO AM I? WHO CARES?

THE CHALLENGE OF CULTURALLY ALIENATED YOUTH

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In recent years there has been a great deal of concern expressed over the plight and circumstances of a segment of our population that has come to be classified as the "impoverished," the "culturally deprived," the "lower class," "working class," the "socio-economically deprived," and the "socially and culturally disadvantaged." These broad classificatory terms have resulted in our making some rather sweeping generalizations about large segments of the population without noting exactly what groups we are talking about and how these groups vary in a number of important areas. My preference - since we must have some categorization in order to make precise whom and what we are talking about - would be "the culturally alienated." By "culturally alienated" I do not mean those who as a result of some psychological or physical condition are unable to function within the boundaries of our society in some acceptable fashion. On the contrary, the "culturally alienated" I refer to consist of individuals who for all practical purposes have both the physical and psychological skills which are needed for social integration within the framework of American society. By "culturally alienated" I do not mean the "lower class" or "lower socio-economic strata" as identified by many sociologists when referring to those people who tend to fall at the bottom of some vertical scale measuring occupational status. There are many people in our society who are not white collar workers or professionals who are very much an integral part of their community and its social institutions. By the "culturally alienated" I do not mean those whose ethnic background indicates migration to this country from other nations several generations back. For all practical purposes those who came to this country in the early 1900's have been acculturated and now are a working part of American life.

The Jewish, Italian, Irish, German, and Russian immigrants who came here at the turn of the century are no longer - in any great number - living in the tenements and slums of New York's East Side. Their children have been socialized to the extent that they have gone through our educational systems, they have moved from the inner city and have taken their place in fairly well furnished homes in suburban America. Traces of the past in terms of foreign accents, old world clothes and foreign newspapers are all but gone. The second generation of these migrants has, in fact, done much to erase valuable memories and needed experiences of the old world in order to become an accepted part of the American style of life. This does not mean that we cannot find some old ethnic grocery stores and eating places but these are rapidly giving way to the supermarket and the chrome dominated restaurant. Though these people do have ancestors who were born and raised in another place, their young are not made uncomfortable by their peers because of the place of birth of their parents.

By the "culturally alienated: I mean those people who are the more recent immigrants to our large urban centers. I refer to those who have come from primarily rural and often provincial backgrounds to find their place in some of our massive metropolitan communities. Specifically, I refer to the American Negro, the Puerto Rican, the Mexican and the Southern White. Again, there is need for clarification in reference to these ethnic

groups. I am not speaking of the middle class Negro who has found his place in some profession and fairly nice, even though at times segregated neighborhood. While he does not enjoy all of the privileges of other Americans, his position is far better than that of the uneducated, unemployed Mexican living within the inner city of Los Angeles. He knows more, enjoys more, and can do more than the Puerto Rican elevator operator living in an East Side New York ghetto. His hopes and aspirations for his children can be placed on a higher plane than those goals held by the Negro on welfare in Chicago. This is not to say that the middle class, professional Negro in America is as well off in many respects as his white counterpart, nor that he should not continue to insist on the same rights afforded others, but rather in terms of the socialization of the young into meaningful roles in our society - our first concern must be with those who not only live in poverty but live outside of the American mainstream of life.

I emphasize that I see the "culturally alienated" as being those who are recent migrants from predominantly rural or folk societies to urban centers, since this is yet another factor which adds to the uniqueness of this group. Within the settings of their old places of residence these people did have affiliations and though the extent of their associations was not as great as those of the middle class, they did have ties with a fairly homogenous group of neighbors. They lived in familiar surroundings and they knew the customs and ways of their communities. They knew their place and they know what to expect from others. Placed in the very center of a strange city and being surrounded by alien mores and habits does not lead to uneventful and efficient integration. The bureaucratic structures of urban society are in fact foreign to many who have their roots in a more provincial climate. The workings of the Police Department, Guidance Clinics PTA's, Welfare Departments, Health Departments, Recreational Departments, are difficult enough for the urban sophisticate to grasp, but the unprepared new-comer is both terrified and intimidated by what he sees. In his home setting he knew who to turn to in times of sickness, happiness, frustration and unemployment - in the world of forms, cards, and numbers, he is frequently at a total loss. These then are some of the reasons that I place those who are unprepared recent arrivals to the inner city within the category of the "culturally alienated."

To this point then I have identified a group of different kinds of people who have been categorized as being culturally alienated. I have noted that they tend, for the most part to be Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans and Southern Whites. They have in common the fact that they are recent arrivals to the inner city from rural places. They are not members of the working class in the sense that behavioral scientists use the term - they are in fact members of the unskilled, unprofessional, un-white collar and too often unemployed class. There are other characteristics which are applicable to the four groups mentioned. They tend to be at the bottom of most scales used by those who study human behavior. They are lowest in income, they are lowest in formal education, they are lowest in employment, they are lowest in participation in civic and social organizations, and they are lowest in most tests of academic ability. In certain other indices

they tend to be among the highest: they are high on family disorganization, mental illness, many physical illnesses, delinquency, and residential mobility. Since statistics tend to be somewhat misleading, it would be worthwhile to pause for a moment and reflect on what has been said here. With respect to mental illness and crime rates, it should be noted that figures most frequently used for the making of estimates are based on reported crimes and reported incidents of mental illness. It is unlikely that a middle class person suffering from emotional distress will place himself in the hands of some public or state institution for help. Rather the more affluent individual will enter private treatment and most statistics pertaining to mental illness are based on data collected from public institutions. As a result we really do not get a reliable picture of who is and who is not ill. In addition the economically limited individual will have less opportunity than the middle class patient for effective care since this takes a large investment of money, leading to an accumulation of mentally ill people among the poorer groups. As for crime rates a similar problem of selectivity is encountered. Because of his social sophistication and his greater access to legal and police authorities the apprehended middle class adult or youngster is less likely than the urban poor to be entered on the police blotter. There are other characteristics of this group that are worthy of our concern even though they are not always apparent or simple to quantify. There is an almost fatalistic acceptance of one's present status in the total societal setting. There is little feeling that the better things in life can be obtained especially by the means outlined by those who attempt to change the attitudes and values of the culturally alienated. There is suspicion of those who have only a part time affiliation with the dilemma faced by the culturally alienated. Too often perhaps the teacher, the social worker, the guidance counselor and the therapist are seen as people just doing their job, that is acting out a role demanded by the agency they represent and not being on the scene because they have any real desire to help the individual attain the goals he holds important. It is not a simple task to convince the alienated that you seek one thing and only one thing - to assist them in the attainment of responsible, productive, creative and dignified ends. The task is made all the more difficult by the fact that there are some involved in working with the culturally alienated who would prefer to be elsewhere. There are many in our schools and social welfare agencies who do not feel or perceive the needs of these people and as a result they do little more than broaden the gap that already exists between the culturally alienated and others in the society. I do not mean to suggest that this insensitivity or unawareness is always deliberate. On the contrary, it may stem from the fact that we have often not been selective in who we have assigned to work with these people nor have we done an adequate job of training professionals for work within the inner city. Even the best of teachers and social workers will have difficulty convincing this group that through proper performance they will find satisfaction in American life. Too many of the culturally alienated have seen members of their own ethnic group rejected not because of improper behavior but because of their color. They have heard too many times the warnings of their elders that they stay out of that place and away from that street. They have witnessed

too many incidents of violence and encountered too much of the more subtle forms of social rejection. They have noted in vivid fashion that when unemployment strikes it comes to them first. The surroundings in which they exist do little to stimulate the feeling that things can be better if one abides by the rules as outlined by the "outsiders." What better lesson does the Negro adolescent need than recent history which indicates that little comes to him who waits and negotiates. On the contrary, we have taught many young Negroes that the "proper channels" and "socially acceptable behaviors" are not the answer when one seeks to attain goals - the answer is mass demonstrations and possible threats of violence.

Each of the factors mentioned here mixed with poverty creates a feeling of intense bitterness and isolation among the culturally alienated. The bitterness stems from the belief that the "good life" as described by the mass media is meant for others who live outside the boundaries of the inner city ghetto. The feeling of isolation arises from everyday experiences which seem to indicate to the culturally alienated that they are alone and not an integral part of American society.

Aside from the factors already mentioned - the feelings of bitterness, isolation, and at times despair - we know that this group of young people find it difficult to compete with their more affluent peers within the setting of many American schools. The failure of these youth is clearly noted by the fact that they are more likely than the middle class child to drop out of school. The high rate of school drop outs among these youth have led some to conclude that the inner city youngster lacks the basic intelligence and motivation to complete his educational requirements. This conclusion, I propose, is much too simple and does not give us an accurate understanding of the problem. The young child who comes from an impoverished home may well be more highly motivated to attend school than his middle class counterpart. For the culturally alienated child the school means more than just a place where you learn certain basic skills - it is a shelter, a place which offers warmth, wholesome food, a smiling face, crayons, music, laughter, books, games, maps, pictures and all other things that are a part of our educational process. For the inner city child the school becomes a haven where the child can escape from the bleakness and misery of his own home. I have witnessed both middle class and poor children reacting to an announcement that school would be closed because of a teacher's meeting. The middle class children meet the announcement with cheers of approval - this is a holiday since this will give them an opportunity to play at home, go shopping with their mother, go on a trip, or go skating. The culturally alienated child is not so pleased with this news for a day away from school holds little that can be considered pleasant or enjoyable. The youngster who comes from a background of poverty is no less eager to learn and to discover than are other children regardless of their origin. The desire to know and to experience is a universal

characteristic of all children. What happens to encourage or discourage this desire is explained by what occurs in our schools and our homes. A rigid teacher who fails to stimulate children -- who fails to challange them and to cultivate this desire for learning will beequally effective in crushing the intellectual curiosity of both middle class and poverty class children. In the same manner a parent can build barriers to learning by demanding conformity to certain patterns, by not providing a climate which stimulates pursuit of new ideas, by refusing to answer questions, and by insisting that the inquiries of the youth are but childish reflections and not worthy of consideration. The culturally alienated child is, however, the one who is most likely to experience the lack of proper support from both parents and teachers. While we can find a rationale for understanding the shortcomings of the parents of these children there can be no excuse for the behavior of adults working in our schools and social welfare agencies. For the truth of the matter is that many of these parents do not know any better. They themselves have not had the formal educational training that will allow them to help their children in the pursuit of knowledge and new ideas. Many of these parents have failed to go beyond the grade school level and as a result they can do little to help their children with arithmetic, reading, and problems of history. It is not, and this we must recognize, a lack of concern on the part of these parents but rather a lack of the knowledge and sophistication that is needed to keep up with what children are being taught in our schools. The parent of the culturally alienated child has proven his concern for the education of his young. We have only to note the number of Negroes who have made themselves vulnerable to violence in order to get their children equal educational opportunities. We have only to recall the mass demonstrations of inner city parents for better schools and teachers to see that these people are not indifferent to the importance of education. True, they are less likely than middle class parents to attend P.T.A. meetings and teacher conferences, but this is not the result always of indifference but rather a set of conditions that hinder involvement. In many homes of the culturally alienated there is no father which means that the mother must play a dual role -- breadwinner and child socializer. Because she works she is unable to make the meetings and conferences. Because she works she is unable to give her children the kind of assistance that is needed for success in our schools. Because of her lack of verbal skills and the proper clothes she is intimidated by the P.T.A. meetings and the teacher conferences where words are used that have little meaning to the parent. There are other factors that would help explain the behavior of the culturally alienated parent. Unlike members of the middle class this poverty group does not deal in long range goals and plans. Each of us of the middle class, has, no doubt, along side of our telephone a calendar; when we are called and asked to participate in some future function we refer to our calendar and make some decision as to our availability. The poverty group does not operate in this manner; in fact, many of them have no telephone or calendars. Their concerns are immediate and time beyond the next 24 hours is difficult to comprehend. These are people who live through each day, one at a time with little thought of the future. Few of them obtain mail and some will go for days without checking their mailbox.

Each of these factors should help explain why the poverty group parent does not eagerly join in with the workings of school sponsored activities and functions.

It should be clear then that over time regardless of initial motivation and desires, that the culturally alienated child will be the first to experience a disenchantment with our schools. Our schools operate for the most part, in terms of middle class norms. The good student is not only expected to be capable in academic areas but he is supposed to have a variety of social skills and attributes. These skills are those that come from one's background and family experiences. The middle class child is encouraged to read and achieve by his parents; they will provide the books and effort needed to accomplish these ends. They will provide the child with a variety of outside experiences including children concerts, plays, trips to art galleries, dancing and music lessons, vacations to other places, and so forth. Each of these activities broadens the horizons of the middle class child and puts him in a better position to compete within the school setting. The culturally alienated child does not have these opportunities. His world is restricted. When he is confronted with a middle class curriculum, which assumes that he has certain verbal skills and a fairly sophisticated awareness of the world beyond his own home, he will have difficulty. Let us recognize again that this child does not have the support of parents who can be of direct assistance with school courses of study. Within the first few years of his formal educational training, this child, unless there is an alteration in the educational approach, will begin to fall behind his peers who come from the more advantaged backgrounds. It is not because he seeks to fail or that he enjoys failure, but rather he is unable to meet standards that are in reality unfair given his limited experience. Over time, as failure continues, a change will take place in his self-concept: he will become convinced that he can do no better and that he is destined to fail in whatever he attempts.

By the time the youngster reaches adolescence, his difficulties are compounded. He has come to accept the fact that he cannot succeed, and like any normal human being who continuously encounters failure and disappointment, he will stop banging his head against the wall and remove himself from the race either physically or psychologically. At the same time, he does not always accept the proposition that the failure is self inflicted; rightly so, perhaps he comes to believe that the cards are and will continue to be stacked against him and that he never had a chance in the first place. Added to this is the factor of the youth culture. He now begins to move away in personal contact and identification with the adults in his world and begins to become more and more dependent on his peers. His peers have made clear what they expect and he understands the criteria they will employ in evaluating him as an indivudual. He knows where he stands and he knows what it takes to succeed in this particular social system. It is my firm belief that by the time the culturally alienated are adolescents and have moved within the framework of their youth culture, there is little that we can do to alter their attitudes and values. For in this case, we must deal not alone with the individual but the members of his group who play an important part in what he will do, what he will say, and what he

will think. The answer, I feel, to drop outs in school will not be found in high school rehabilitation programs but rather in work with the very, very young. It is at this stage of his life that the child is most eager and excited over school; it is this stage of life where he is least dependent on his peers; it is this stage where his parents still maintain some control over his actions. In addition, the adolescent, not unlike his peers from the more affluent clas. , has come to learn that the giving of status and prestige is not alwa/s depende.. on achievement in school or through responsible involvements within the community. but rather through the exhibiting of athletic abilities, proper fashions of dress, the possession of a car or a bottle, or an awareness of current fads in music. We can see this clearly in the fact that many youngsters of the culturally alienated will direct most of their energies into athletics for this is one activity that does not call for verbal skills and intellectual interests yet does pay off in terms of recognition from both peers and adults.

Now what of those who work with the culturally alienated? How do they feel about this group? What have been their experiences? I can attempt to answer these questions in two ways. First, by noting that many who have been engaged in special programs such as the Higher Horizons Project in New York and the Greater Cities Project in Detroit, have indicated that through modified curriculum, special extra-curricular activities, additional staff members as well as trained personnel, progress can be made with these children. The results of these programs, however, are not as yet clear nor do we have any clear indication of how effective these special programs will be in terms of the long range behavior of these youngsters. What we have at this time is a feeling, either accurate or wishful, that something can be done.

My own research experience would lead me to say that there are differences in how different kinds of teachers will perceive and respond to these children. Briefly, a study of Negro and white elementary school teachers who work with inner city children (most of whom were Negro children) indicates that race of the teacher and years of teaching experience are related to the sentiments of teachers. We found generally Negro teachers were more satisfied with their jobs of teaching these children than were white teachers. For both groups, however, the longer a teacher has been in the teaching profession the less satisfied she is with her job. We found that Negro and white teachers differed in backgrounds, with white teachers more likely than Negroes to have come from smaller communities and middle class backgrounds. This difference in background, no doubt plays some part in variations in job satisfaction since we would expect that Negro teachers, because of their own backgrounds, would be more realistic in their expectations as to what it would be like to teach in the inner city. Reasons for job dissatisfaction were different for both groups of teachers. While Negro teachers put the blame on system factors such as overcrowded classrooms, old buildings, and inferior equipment, white teachers placed the responsibility for their displeasure on human factors such as the poor behavior of students and a lack of interest on the part of the parents. Finally, these teachers differed significantly in their perceptions of these children:

although Negro teachers saw these children as "fun loving," "happy," and "cooperative" white teachers described the same children as being "talkative," "lazy," and "high strung." These differences would indicate that at least among this sample of teachers there are great variations in how these children are perceived by adults who are responsible for their socialization. The results of this research would also raise one other question -- who is correct? Which of these teachers is accurate in their perceptions? I do not know; I might even suggest that they are both correct in that perhaps Negro children do not react in the same way to whites as they do to Negroes. This is not such a far-fetched idea since we would all have to admit that we frequently tend to evaluate one another in terms of race, ethnic, and class background. Evidence that perhaps children of different backgrounds do see the same adults in different ways is found in some current research we are conducting with Negro and white adolescents in different kinds of high schools throughout the country. Generally, our initial analysis of data would suggest that lower income adolescents, and especially Negro high school students, are less likely than white youth to believe that teachers and other adults in the society have a desire to help the student attain his goals. In addition we find that lower income youth are less likely than middle class youth to believe that there is agreement between the goals that they hold and those held by their teachers. Finally, we find that lower income youth are more likely than the more affluent classes to indicate that they frequently cannot see the value of formal education. Again, this seems most true of the Negro youth.

At this point we can only speculate as to why lower income adolescents, especially Negroes, should hold these attitudes. Going out on the speculative limb, I would propose the following: First, Negro youth are less likely than white youth to see the relationship between what is taught in the classroom and their own personal goals. It is difficult for them to believe that when the chips are down and they are in competition with a white that they will be judged on the basis of their academic performance as opposed to their color. In other words, many do not really feel that formal education will be the salient factor in whether they are or not accepted by others. Disaffiliation with school and confusion over the value of school on the part of Negro youth can also be attributed to the types of goals held by lower income Negro youth. As was noted earlier these are people who deal in terms of immediate gratifications; they find it difficult to defer their thoughts and energies to some future time. The culturally alienated student is thinking of the immediate and the classroom situation is frequently centered about activities that have some distant reward. Why Negro youth should perceive that whites in the society are not really eager to help them attain their goals is not difficult to understand when we look at the history of the Negro in American society. We have come to a point where the intentions of even the most liberal whites are doubted by the Negro.

Having covered several dimensions of the youth culture and the culturally alienated we come to the most difficult task of all - the proposing of ideas that might be employed in order to facilitate the successful integration of the culturally alienated youngster. It should be recognized of course that

the pinpointing of characteristics and attributes of a specific group is a relatively easy task when compared with the suggestion of approaches to be used in bringing about change in the status, attitudes, values, and behavior of the group described. With this admission in mind I would suggest the following: First, a dramatic change in both the selection and training of those who are assigned to work with the culturally alienated youngster. There is no reason to believe that every individual, by merely completing certain formal educational requirements, is able to work with this group of youth. On the contrary there is every reason to believe that it takes a certain kind of person with certain kinds of abilities and feelings to do an effective job. As we are cautious in who we allow to work with the emotionally disturbed or the physically handicapped so must we practice discretion in who we assign the task of socializing the impoverished. There are people who are not able to function with these children. There are adults who are not able to perceive or identify with the plight of this group. There are some people who do not have the patience of the physical stamina to work on a day to day basis with youngsters who live by standards and conditions quite unlike those experienced by the middle class. It is better to recognize this factor before we allow an individual to work with these youngsters rather than take the chance that both the adult and the child will eventually encounter bitter disappointment. It is not an admission of defeat to recognize that one would do better with a different kind of clientele. It is in fact an admission of one's own insights and professional status to declare that in terms of the growth of the child and his eventual integration within the society it is better that "I do not become a part of his world at this time."

Aside from the process of professional selection there is a great need to alter our current practices in the preparation of professionals - be they teachers, social workers, therapists or guidance counselors - who are to work with the culturally alienated. It is a waste of time and funds to teach all professionals as if they were all going to go out and work with the same kinds of youth. The professional who is assigned to the inner city area must have special training in the sociology and psychology of this group. The professional must be shown beforehand what to expect in terms of the home conditions of these children, how they perceive the world in which they live and what their world is really like. The professional who is to work with this group must be made familiar with the neighborhood and social institutions of the culturally alienated. A term of practice teaching or field work experience of several months are not sufficient for allowing the individual to know what his professional duties will be like nor is it sufficient for him to gain insights into a world in which he has little exposure. It is essential that those who feel that they might want to work with these youth have more extensive pre-professional contact with professionals already in the area. Let us keep in mind that not all children in our society represent the middle class and that the techniques appropriate for the middle class youngster will not always suffice in the context of the deprived.

There is a need to recognize that the "middle class" curriculum and methods of our schools are not always best when it comes to certain kinds of children. It is essential that we show them the immediate relationship between what we do in the classroom and what these young people expect out of life. It is not enough to use inter-racial readers or textbooks that describe urban life. What is more important is that the child recognize that what we do in the school and the social work agency is salient for the future of the child. That what we are teaching will mean the difference between a life of poverty and ridicule and a life of dignity.

There is a great need to work with youngsters before it is too late. We must recognize that these children are at a disadvantage even before they enter school and do as much as possible to broaden their horizons even before they enter the formal educational system. We must work with the parents as well as the children. Our work with parents must be realistic in that we have to recognize their lack of certain educational skills and their involvement in activities essential to the welfare of their families. We should avoid the popular jargon so often heard in middle-class teacher-parent conferences and make clear to the parent just what he or she can do to assist in the development of the child. We must be realistic in noting that here are adults who are not aware of what books to read - nor how they are to be used; these are parents who do not know about public libraries. It is crucial that we teach both the parent and the child at the same time without making the parent feel intimidated or humiliated by the experience.

We must by our actions make it clear to the child that we not only have the ability to help him attain the better life but that we have the desire to do so. This is not a simple task since words alone will not be enough. We must indicate by our actions that we are committed to the freedom and equality of all men, regardless of their background. We must show the child and his parents that the good life is not the exclusive right of any one class or people. We must also point out that the job cannot be done by the professional himself but must be carried out by the individual who seeks to attain a life of dignity and productivity. We must declare by our actions that we recognize the pain and deprivation that has been encountered by this group but that we also are firmly convinced that the situation is not futile and that change can be accomplished. Again, I emphasize that words alone will not alter the situation. These people have heard all the words - what is needed now is a symbolic act or deed.

We must also note that there is a real need to think in terms of the total youth culture which exists in our society. We must find the means by which we can alter the current value system that exists among many of our youth. We must move to a situation where there can be little doubt in the minds of our youth that we hold academic achievement of greater importance than athletic performance and that we place greater prestige with the youngster who makes a contribution to his community through worthwhile efforts than to the adolescent who excels in dancing, the possession of a car, or in playing the role of school cheerleader.

Finally, we must all recognize that our own personal feelings as to the desirability of the "culturally alienated" as personal friends or neighbors is of no real importance. As professionals it is our duty and responsibility to see to it that we make every effort to absorb this group into the framework of American life. For if we fail here, we have not only failed as professionals but we have done much to minimize the probability that our society will endure and flourish over time.